

CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. II.

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NO. 18.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

FOR THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

SKETCHES NO. I.

WHEN we look abroad on the Christian Church, and see into how many sects and parties it is divided, many of them advocating doctrines diametrically opposite to each other, and afterwards examine the unity and simplicity of the doctrine of Christ as displayed in the New Testament, we are lost in amazement that so much error, strife, and dissension should have crept into religion, and still be retained with undiminished reverence, particularly in an age like the present, when an access to the fountain of all truth, is in the power of all without distinction, from the highest even to the lowest.—It is high time that a reformation should take place in the church, and the creeds of human councils, and synods be rejected for the creed of Christ—of God, as set forth on “the page of truth,”—that we no longer receive as the faith of the Bible, doctrines built upon detached portions of the divine testimony, and propt up by an abstract metaphysical reasoning, the very foundations of which are arbitrary data entirely of man’s invention.—It is high time that we acknowledge our own ignorance, and go at once to the foot of the cross for instruction.

To take a general and very rapid view of the theology and morals inculcated by the New Testament will be the subject of the present number, and they will be found to be such as are most consonant with the character of A GOD, and in every instance designed to perfect the *virtue* and consequent *happiness* of human nature; and, though totally contradicting in a majority of instances the fine spun theological system of self styled orthodoxy, they are not the less true and precious.

The ideas we are here taught to form of the *Divinity*, are such as are agreeable to the first dictates and principles of natural religion, and which the mind approves as just and rational. The gos-

pel leads us to cherish the most exalted ideas of the majesty of the ONE supreme GOD, the great Creator and governor of the universe, from whom all beings ultimately proceed, and to whose glory all things will ultimately conspire.—It represents this being under the most amiable character, to engage our affection, and attract our love to him. That we and ours are perpetually under the superintendence of his paternal guardianship and care—that he is ever disposed to direct our enquiries, secure us from error, illuminate our minds, and supply our wants; and that he watches over our best interests and happiness with all the anxiety and affection which distinguish parental kindness. That all rationally are the offspring and unalienable subjects of this *Good Being*, who makes the wisest and best provision for their happiness both in time and eternity.—That the providence of God is *universal*, and extends to every individual in the whole system of beings. That *not a sparrow falls to the ground, nor a hair from our head without the cognizance of the Almighty*. That if God regularly supplies the returning wants of the brute creation, and clothes even a transient flower with such inimitable beauty, much more are rational creatures the objects of his providential care. It leads us to conceive how infinitely dear the human race is to God, whose recovery from sin and consequent happiness is the object of his concern, and whose redemption and salvation, a principle of *love* and *compassion* for them induces him, by a gracious interposition, to effect and secure. [It represents him as a *pure spirit*, not to be worshipped with superstitious foppery, splendid and unmeaning decorations, magnificent fabrics, and the pomp and pageantry of external show—but that the worship he requireth, consists in the devotion of the heart, and in the oblation of pure and holy affections. It teaches us, that we are not to conceive of God, as a being whom we can prevail with to act

contrary to his all-wise intentions, by the dint of importunity, and by such noisy and clamorous repetitions and extravagancies as the *heathen* used in his worship. The *love* of God it enjoins upon us, as the *first* and *great commandment*—that this great principle should fill and possess all our powers, and influence the whole of our conduct—that we should seek after the nearest conformity to the Deity our imperfections can attain, and imitate him in doing good. It represents him as continually present with us, the spectator of our conduct, and the intimate witness of the principles by which we are actuated. It teaches us the great duty of resignation to him from every argument and motive that can affect an ingenious dependant creature, by informing us, that all the dispensations of God to us are founded in infinite *wisdom* and *goodness*,—that the corrections of his rod are salutary; that all his afflictions are messengers of good,—that he knows what allotments are best for us, and finally will prove most perfective of our virtue and happiness. So that piety to God, as taught in the gospel, is a most amiable, engaging and rational principle, worthy such a being as man, to pay to the *Divinity*—the worship here prescribed hath a noble simplicity in it worthy of Deity, whose pure and perfect mind and intelligence, and the adoration, love, and imitation of him here enjoined, are such as greatly exalt the human character, and ennoble and dignify the heart of the rational worshipper.

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To be continued.

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MR. EDITOR,

The following exposition of Rev. xxii. 18. if deemed worthy a place in “The Messenger,” may either lead to more correct notions of the text among readers generally; or induce some more enlightened mind to exhibit a

construction, more congenial with the spirit of the scriptures.

"For I testify unto every man, that heareth the words of the prophesy of this book; if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book."

The following particulars embrace all, that can be of consequence for us to know, concerning the text.

1. Who have added to "these things?"

2. What has been added? And

3. What are the consequences of such additions?

1. Proper attention to the last of these queries, will furnish, it is believed, both a light and a guide, through what the policy and superstition of mankind, have induced them for ages to approach and dread, as a dark and devious labyrinth, dignified with the name of *mystery*.

The consequences of adding to "these things," are expressed in the text itself, "God shall add unto him, the plagues, that are written in this book."—In the 15th chap. 1st verse, the apostle says, "and I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God."—In the following 16th chap. 1st verse, we are informed on whom the plagues fell—"upon the *men* which had the mark of the beast, and upon them, that worshipped his image." It may perhaps be objected, that those, who should add to "these things," might not bear the mark of the beast, nor worship his image; and therefore may not feel the plagues of such as do.—This is impossible, because they are denominated the *last plagues*, which is not the fact, if there is any force in the above objection. It follows then, that the worshippers of the beast added to these things.

2. What has been added? In Rev. 22d chap. 9th verse, the apostle was commanded to "worship God," and at the same time, forbidden to worship his messenger in these emphatically strong terms, "See thou do it not."—Hence God "only shalt thou serve."

To unite or associate any being, or beings, whether real or imaginary with him, as objects of equal devotion, is manifestly to add to these things. Un-

fortunately for the church, the christian religion and humanity, such associations and additions have been made. The *second*, and the *third persons* in what is denominated the *trinity*, have been united with the one supreme, and ever to be revered object of worship—and while one of the persons thus associated disclaims its application to himself, and refers the worshipper to God alone, in terms urgent and commanding as quoted above, "See thou do it not."—Nor did the work of adding cease, until the "worshipping of angels," had swelled the catalogue of such offences to an enormous amount; and debased, corrupted, and degraded christianity in an equal ratio.

3. We have already shown, on whom the plagues fell; but it remains to be enquired, what the plagues are. These are enumerated in Rev. 16th chap. but a summary of them is found in the 18th chap. 8th verse, "death, and mourning, and famine," the end of which may be seen in the 21st chap. 4th verse, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away."

How large a portion of the nominal christian community, the above remarks may comprise, as the subjects of the plagues mentioned in the divine testimony, the writer of this article presumes not to determine. But he humbly recommends to all, that investigation of scripture, and examination of sentiments, which they may suppose are derived from it, as shall enable them to "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," and by him receive "the reconciliation."

MARCUS.

FROM THE UNIVERSALIST MAGAZINE.

ANECDOTE

OF THE REV. JOHN MURRAY.

This anecdote is characteristic of the engagedness which Mr. Murray felt, while proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation—and also of the violent opposition which existed at the time, when he was almost the only preacher in this country who publicly proclaimed Universal Redemption through the merits of the Son God.

"On a Sunday evening he had en-

gaged to preach a lecture in Boston. Some opposition was discoverable previous to this; but at this time particularly, some evil designing men had created a very offensive smell, by sprinkling the habiliments of the pulpit with a very noxious drug. For some moments he was so much overpowered, as to induce an apprehension, that it would be impossible he should proceed; but his God supported him. These dæmons of confusion were, however, not quite satisfied; many stones were violently thrown into the windows; yet no one received any other injury than the alarm which was created. At length, a large rugged stone, weighing about a *pound and a half*, was forcibly thrown into the window behind his back; it missed him. Had it sped as it was aimed, it must have finished him. Lifting it up, and waving it in the view of the people, he said, "this argument is *solid* and *weighty*, but it is neither *rational* nor *convincing*." Exclamations, from various parts of the house, were echoed and re-echoed: "Pray, Sir, leave the pulpit, your life is at hazard." Be it so, he returned, "the debt of nature must be paid, and I am as *ready* and as *willing*, to discharge it now, as I shall be fifty years hence. Yet, for your consolation, suffer me to say, I am immortal, while He who called me into existence has any business for me to perform; and when He has executed those purposes, for which he designed me, He will graciously sign my passport to realms of blessedness. With your good leave, then, I will pursue my subject, and while I have a—"Thus saith the Lord,"—for every point of doctrine which I advance, not all the stones in Boston, except they stop my breath, shall shut my mouth, or arrest my testimony."

See *Murray's Life*, pp. 193, 194.

Just received, and for sale at No. 58 Chestnut street.

A Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. JOHNSON, containing an account of her sufferings, during four years, with the Indians and French. Together with an Appendix, containing the sermons preached at her funeral, and that of her mother; with sundry other interesting articles. Third edition, corrected and considerably enlarged. Price 50 cents. We can assure our readers that this is a most interesting narrative. The Editor of the Messenger was personally acquainted with the subject of it, and preached the sermon mentioned above, at her funeral.

Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, December 2, 1820.

A TREATISE ON THE CARNAL MIND.

Continued from page 68.

That the devil was always a devil, and never any thing else but a devil, is clearly proved from 1 John iii. 8. "The devil sinneth from the beginning." And again, John viii. 44. "The devil was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him; when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it."

Hence the very first moment the devil existed, he was a sinner, a liar, and a murderer; and he never was any thing better; for he was so from the beginning; that is, from the beginning of his existence.

How then shall we say that the devil was ever a holy angel? What holy act did he ever perform? If none, I shall deny that he ever possessed a holy principle to act from; and I believe it will be very difficult for any one to prove to the contrary.

Objection. When it is said that the devil *abode* not in the truth, does it not imply that he was once *in the truth*, but *abode* not, that is *continued* not in the same?

Answer. "The devil sinneth from the beginning:" how then could he be in the truth? No, he never was in the truth; therefore it is said that he *abode* not, that is, his *abode* was not, or, he never *abode*, in the truth. This, I think, must be the sense of the text when taken in connexion with the context, "the devil was a murderer from the beginning."

But notwithstanding I shall contend that the devil is not a real being, yet I am willing to suppose, for the sake of making a little further inquiry, that he is. I would then ask, if the devil be a real being, a being possessed of entity, how shall we account for his existence? For it will not be admitted, I presume, by any, that the devil is self-existent! I would therefore ask, if the devil be a real being, who was his creator? Or who was his father? Let those who

believe in the existence of a real being in opposition to God, answer the above questions, according to the above proposition.

But were I to attempt an answer, I should reason thus: God being the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, proves, beyond all contradiction, that Christ is the Son of God. And the devil being the father of lies, according to scripture, equally proves a *lie* to be a child of the devil. Hence, I should say, the *grandfather* of a lie, is the *father* of the devil!!!

But if the devil be a real father, where are his real children? If he be a real being, where are his works? What has he brought forth, but falsehood and deception? What has he begotten, but false imaginations? Name, if you can, one single fact, or one single thing, that the devil is the author of. They do not exist! Is not this a sufficient proof, that the devil himself is altogether a false, imaginary being?

The truth of this will more fully appear if we consider that Christ said to his disciples, "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil."—And to Peter, "Get thee behind me, satan." Now, no one will dispute but that Judas and Peter were real beings; but I say they were real beings independent of that which constituted one a devil, and the other satan. And I say further, if we have found the devil in man, we need not search for any other sinning angel in order to discover him. And it is presumed that no one will pretend that what constituted Judas a devil was a real being separate from Judas.

But it may be said, that although that was not a real being in Judas, which constituted him a devil, yet this evil disposition did not exist originally in him, but came from some other source; and as it is said that "satan entered into him," it proves that there is such a being as a real existing devil, some where or other, the same as a house proves the existence of its builder; "for every house is builded by some man." Heb. iii. 4.

As plausible as this argument may appear, to some, it is only shifting, without removing, the difficulty. For as it is agreed, on the part of the objector, that God made the angel, and did not make him a devil, I have as good right to contend that the existence of this

evil principle, or disposition, in the angel, proves the existence of a devil; in some still *higher* source; as much as the existence of it in man proves the existence of it in the angel, or that there is any such thing as an angelic devil!

It makes no difference how far we trace this principle (or rather want of principle) so long as we must trace it to a *real*, or an *imaginary* source. And when we take into consideration the scripture account of the devil, that he is "a liar, and the father of it," no argument, can be more conclusive. It proves him to be altogether negative, false, and deceptive. So far from possessing one particle necessary to constitute a real being, he is the mere *want of perfection* in all *imperfect beings*.

I shall now examine, more particularly, the Scripture account of the devil; and fairly lay open to view the light which I have gathered from that source, upon this subject.

There are two words in the original, which are indiscriminately rendered *devil*, in the translation. That which appears to be nearly synonymous with *satan*, and which tempted Christ, in the wilderness, is *διαβολος*, *diabolos*, the true meaning of which, is, a *calumniator*, a *false accuser*, a *slanderer*; which is agreeable to the account which Christ gave of him; "He is a *liar*, and the father of it."

Any being, then, capable of lying and deceiving, may become a devil. The devil, however, is not the *being*, but only the *father*, or *source*, of the *lie* or *deception*.

Let it be remembered in this place, that "it is impossible for God to lie." But *diabolos* is the deceiver; and, if it were possible, he would deceive the very *elect*. But Christ, the Elect of God, is not to be deceived. Hence all the efforts of the devil, like those of his tempting Christ, will turn out, in the end, to be equally vain and fruitless.

But those devils which Christ cast out of people, out of Mary Magdalene and others, were *δαίμονια*, *daimonia*, that is, impure spirits. People who were lunatic, or otherwise deranged, in the days of Christ and his apostles, were supposed to be possessed of *demons*, or of impure spirits: and as

Christ had power over all diseases, and accordingly healed those persons, so, in the opinion of the people, he cast out *demons*, devils, or impure spirits.

Much of the scripture language, as I humbly conceive, was accommodated to the weakness of the understanding of man, at the time those sacred testimonies were written. The people believed in the existence of evil spirits, as well as good; and whether the idea was true or false, it could not be easily eradicated. But it does not necessarily follow that those demons, or evil spirits, were real beings, because some passages appear to favor that idea; for it is evident that those who were lunatic, which is a madness that was supposed to be influenced by the moon, were also considered as being possessed with devils. See Matth. xvii. 15, 18. "Lord have mercy on my son; for he is *lunatic*, and sore vexed—And Jesus rebuked the *devil*, and he departed out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour." Again, the Jews said, concerning Christ, John x. 20, "He hath a *devil*, and is *mad*; why hear ye him?" All of which circumstances fully show, that deranged and insane persons were supposed to be possessed with devils.

I have already admitted that there are some passages which appear to favor the idea of literal devils; that is, that the evil spirits were real beings. I will mention, perhaps, the most forcible of any of this kind. In Matt. viii. 28—34, Mark v. 1—20, and Luke viii. 26—36,* we have an account of a man possessed with so many devils that his name was called Legion. "And all the devils besought Christ, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave." Here, it is said, that the devils spake with an audible voice, which proves them to be real beings.

I do not know but that this argument may be considered conclusive, by some, but, admitting that it is so, I think it must be also granted, that Christ, for once at least, was so very condescending, even to the devils them-

selves, as to hear their prayer, and grant their request!

I do not, however, wish to evade the force of any argument that ought to operate against me, neither do I feel disposed to dispute the facts contained in the passages alluded to above, so far as they respect the man, or the swine; but as I do not find sufficient evidence in this account, to convince me that the devils were real beings, I shall barely give my opinion respecting it.

The whole account respecting this man, proves him, I think, to be deranged. His language is like that of a deranged person. And as the idea of evil spirits was then very prevalent, it is possible that he might fancy himself to be possessed of a legion of devils, or unclean spirits. The request, therefore, might have been the request of the man; and the same Power, which performed the cure, might, for wise purposes, move him to make this request. Or, from the circumstance that followed, respecting the swine, it might have been supposed, by his disciples, to be the request of the devils; and as this idea became prevalent, it was finally recorded as such.* But

*Perhaps this may be thought, by some, to be using too much freedom with *Divine revelation*; but I feel constrained to confess, that I cannot conceive of any thing to be *Divine revelation*, which, according to my understanding, contradicts every principle of *reason*.—It is true, I am under the necessity of believing that which I cannot comprehend; but the reason why I believe, is, 1st, Because I can conceive of such a thing—2dly, I have some evidence in support of it—and 3dly, I know of nothing in nature that can contradict it. And where these things do not occur it is impossible for me to obtain a belief.

And as the apostles were men, and, as such, could not know the truth, more than others, any farther than they were enlightened into it, it is fair to conclude that they wrote according to their understanding and view of things, from the means of knowledge which they possessed. And so far as we are able to ascertain the *facts*, from which they gathered their conclusions, we have an undoubted right to put our own construction upon those *facts*. And in doing this, I cannot conceive that we do any violence to Scripture testimony, or shut our eyes against *Divine revelation*.

The reader ought to be informed, if he does not know, that the Scriptures were not written till a long time after the facts recorded therein took place. This miracle, or cure, spoken of above, was performed in the year of our Lord 31. Matthew wrote his gospel in A. D. 39. Mark wrote his in A. D. 44. And Luke in A. D. 55; which was 22 years after the crucifixion. So that the first

whether it was by the request of any one or not, it was undoubtedly for wise purposes that the unclean spirits were sent into the swine, and also, that they were choaked in the sea.

Taking a further view of this subject, I think I can discover a divine excellency in Christ's casting out demons or evil spirits; for it did not destroy the man, the real being, but he was found afterwards, "sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind."

TO BE CONTINUED.

☞ The remaining copies on hand, of the Sermon from Ezek. xiii. 4. recently published, may be had at No. 58, Chesnut street, for the purpose of distribution, at the moderate price of 50 cents a dozen—retail price, as heretofore, 10 cents. As soon as these are disposed of, another, from 2 Thessalonians, i. 7, 8, 9, will be immediately put to press.

ERRATA.

Page 68, in the Poetry, verse 6, line 1, for prints, read paints; do. line 4, for scorns read scenes.

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THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE GOSPEL.

The Almighty spake, and Gabriel sped,
Upborne on wings of light;
JEHOVAH's glory round him spread,
And chang'd to day the night.

Swift down to earth th' archangel flew,
From God's eternal throne;
His shining robe, of rainbow hue,
The starry host outshone.

One note of peace was heard on high,
Glad tidings roll'd around;
And angels left their native sky,
To catch salvation's sound.

Shout! shout for joy!—rejoice O earth!
All hail this glorious morn;
Rejoice! rejoice! in Jesus' birth,
This day a SAVIOUR'S born.

From Zion's hill to world's above,
Re-echoed back the strain;
And golden harps, attun'd to love,
Thus swept Euphrata's plain.

He comes! The well belov'd of God!
Good will, peace, joy for men!
Glad tidings shout to all abroad,
So be it Lord. Amen!

writer's account of this miracle appears to have been written, at least, 8 years after the fact took place. But according to Dr. Lardner, none of the gospels were written earlier than A. D. 63.

*The reader is requested to turn to the above passages and read them at full length. According to Matthew, there were two men; but Mark and Luke mention only one.